



Freezer Paper Stencil

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PARTS:

- [Image \(1\)](#)
printout of black and white image.
- [Freezer paper \(1\)](#)
- [Cutting mat \(1\)](#)
self-healing.
- [Craft knife \(1\)](#)
- [Fabric item \(1\)](#)
blank T-shirt or other fabric item.
- [Iron \(1\)](#)
- [Fabric paint \(1\)](#)
fabric paint or silk-screening ink for fabric.
- [Sponge paintbrush \(1\)](#)

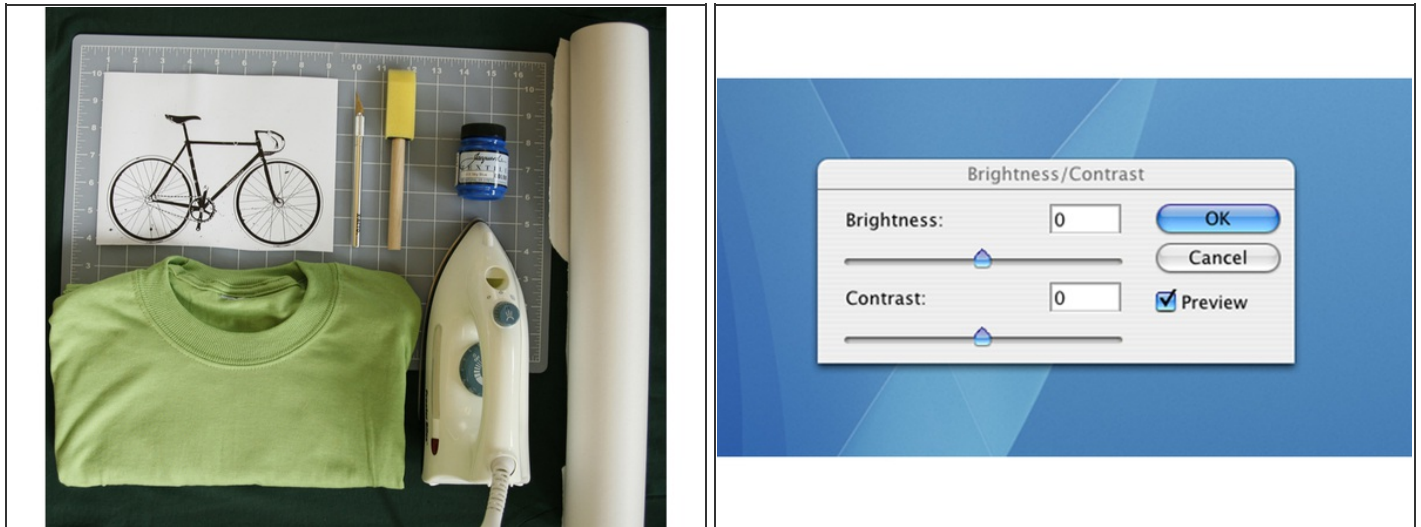
SUMMARY

If you were a teenager in the 90s like I was, you'll remember being a sentient being in a world without the Galactic Information Superhighweb, or internet as we now know it. Before this age of enlightenment, we suffered many great hardships. I vividly recall cobbling together my own T-shirts proclaiming my favorite bands, using a masking-tape-and-fabric-paint technique with all too shoddy results. Today it takes 5 minutes to Google a world of

crafty people who share amazing techniques, allowing you to create just about any T-shirt image you'd like.

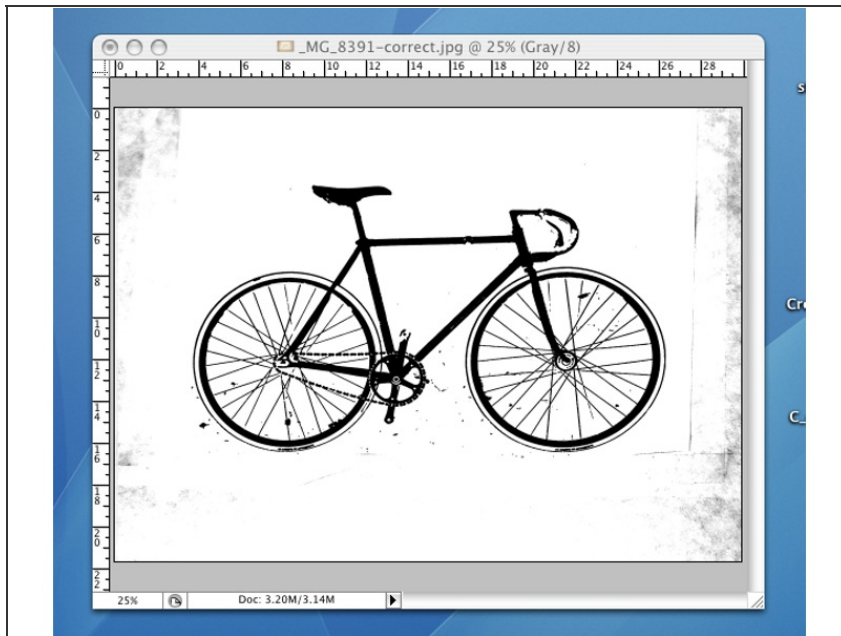
My favorite is freezer paper stenciling, which allows you to iron your design onto the T, securing the stencil in place and ensuring that paint won't easily seep under it.

Step 1 — Turn photos into stencils.



- Increase the contrast. High contrast works best. Ideally your photo should be high-contrast to begin with. This means lots of very light areas and lots of very dark areas. If not, you can use your graphics program to bump the contrast way up. In Photoshop, choose the menu **Image > Adjustments > Brightness/Contrast** and then move the Contrast slider to the right.
- Clear the clutter. Try using the “lasso tool” to cut out the background of the photo so that the main object in it is the only thing in the photo.

Step 2 — Print out the image.



- Print out a black and white image without too many tiny details in it. You can easily make a black and white image out of a photograph using any graphics program. Basically, you want to have the software convert the photo to be just 2 colors: black and white.
- To do this with Photoshop, load up the image and click the menu option **Image > Mode > Indexed Color**, then set the dialog box settings like so, and click OK:
- Palette: Local (Adaptive); Colors: 2; Forced: Black and White; Transparency: unchecked; Dither: None
- To do this in Microsoft Paint, save the image as a Monochrome Bitmap. Just about every graphics program should have a way to do this; it's just a matter of poking around in the menus a bit to find it.

Step 3 — Cut the freezer paper.



- Freezer paper is white opaque paper that is waxy on only one side, as opposed to wax paper (never use wax paper for this project!), which is waxed on both sides. You can find freezer paper in supermarkets next to the aluminum foil and plastic wrap.
- Cut a piece of freezer paper the same size as your printout. Place the freezer paper onto your cutting mat, waxy side down. Then place the printout face up on top of the freezer paper. Use a couple of pieces of tape to secure the printout to the freezer paper.

Step 4 — Cut out the black space.



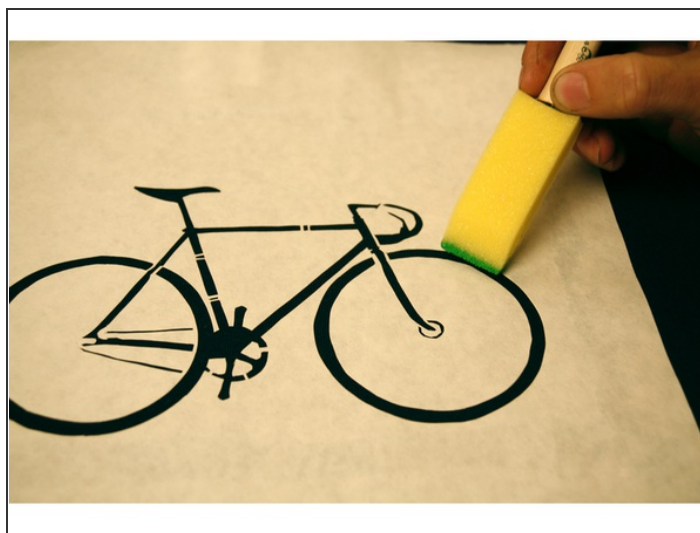
- Using the printout as your guide, use the X-Acto to cut out all the black space in the image, cutting through both the printout and the freezer paper at the same time. Try to leave the pieces of paper intact even though you are slicing sections into them. If there are a few areas of the printed image that are just too detailed to cut out precisely, you can fudge it and use your judgment to cut the area out in a more simple way.

Step 5 — Iron the paper onto the shirt.



- Throw out the printout when you're done with the cutting. Now you have a piece of freezer paper with all of the segments of your image sliced into it. Lay this onto your T-shirt waxy side down and iron it down lightly. The freezer paper will adhere to the T-shirt.
- Carefully peel out the sliced-up segments that correspond to the black part of the image. Then give the remaining freezer paper another once-over with the iron to make sure it is nicely adhered to the fabric.

Step 6 — Dab on the paint.



- Using a sponge brush (some are made for stenciling), dab fabric paint all over the stencil, making sure to apply a nice opaque coat. Dabbing the paint with a sponge brush works better than a bristle paintbrush, which can cause paint to seep under the stencil.

Step 7 — Wait for the paint to dry, and then peel off the stencil.



- The instructions for the fabric paint may indicate that you need to “heat set” it with an iron. If so, follow those instructions. Now you’ve got a technique for a custom-stenciled shirt, spiffed up with whatever your heart desires.
- Resources: [Stencil Revolution](#): A community of die-hard stencilers who share their work, their techniques, and their image files.

This project first appeared in [CRAFT Volume 02](#), pages 105-107.

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